

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 650

EA 023 109

TITLE Transforming Education: The Minnesota Plan.  
INSTITUTION Minnesota State Dept. of Education, St. Paul. Office of Educational Leadership.  
PUB DATE 90  
NOTE 27p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)  
  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Change; \*Change Strategies; \*Educational Change; \*Educational Improvement; \*Educational Innovation; Elementary Secondary Education; Futures (of Society); Program Development; \*School Restructuring  
  
IDENTIFIERS \*Minnesota

## ABSTRACT

Factors such as the need for flexible, responsive schools prompted the 1980s national dialogue about possible societal and economic changes in the role of the educational system. Those same factors set the national and Minnesota agenda for youth in the 1990s and on into the 21st Century. Changes that occur in the educational systems should achieve goals such as raising all youth to an effective performance level in communication and lifelong learning skills. In 1985 the Minnesota State Legislature established a mission for education in Minnesota to help individuals acquire skills that will enable them to develop their maximum potential for leading fulfilling lives in a complex society. In response to legislative requirements for a stronger educational system, the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) and its Research and Development (R & D) Project were created to transform Minnesota education into structures capable of meeting the rapidly changing needs of society. The R & D Project is intended to establish processes for this transformation. During the first 2 years, the development activities will implement new processes for designing and delivering education, while research activities will help identify policies and practices that hinder implementation and will include site-based case studies and action research. Two appendices outline the process used to develop the improvement plan and the characteristics of a transformed education system. (22 references) (EJS)

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# Transforming Education: The Minnesota Plan

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## Transforming Education: The Minnesota Plan

Minnesota Department of Education  
Division of Learning and Instructional Services  
Office of Educational Leadership  
Richard J. Mesenburg, Manager  
1990



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## *Preface*

The purpose of this document, developed by the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL), is to present the plan for the transformation of education in Minnesota through the OEL Research and Development Program. The plan begins with a brief discussion of the environment for change in education systems nationally and in Minnesota. The agenda for youth in this decade and into the 21st century is included. Next, the legislative response to the need for change is presented. This includes a brief discussion of the legislative intent and the legislation that established the OEL. The long-term vision for the OEL R&D Project is then presented. A brief review of the research function and the clinical experience of the OEL and a summary concludes the text of the plan.

Detailed descriptions of several elements, the process used to develop the plan, and the characteristics of a transformed education system are presented in the appendices.

It should be noted that this plan is considered to be a "living" document. In a program that is creating new structures, the plan must reflect changes made. Consequently, the plan includes mechanisms to assess progress and to make modifications to fit new structures as they are developed.

## *Environment for Change*

In the 1980's, a combination of reports led to a national dialogue regarding societal and economic changes and the role of the education system. Much of the discussion regarding reform in education was focused on recommended changes. Somewhat lost in the discussion were the factors that led to the dialogue in the first place. Reactions to the recommended changes ensued before a readiness for change and creative responses had been developed. The focus of discussion was more on raising standards and other tinkering rather than on addressing the factors requiring more fundamental changes in society and in schooling. It is the intention in this plan to address these factors and to establish a sound approach to such changes.

### *Factors*

The factors that prompted the dialogue still exist. Emerging political, social, and economic trends and events have added to the sense of urgency of dealing with the factors. Presented succinctly, the factors are:

**The Quality of Life in Minnesota is in Jeopardy** The quality of life for the majority of people in the United States and Minnesota depends in part on personal and social values, the health of the economy, and attitudes that work for the common good. Much of the future social and political fabric of the nation and state will be directly related to the values and attitudes developed in our youth, and to the health of the economy. The values and attitudes of a significant portion of our youth are changing in ways that cause concern. For example, more youth are involved in drugs and crime, are becoming teen parents, and are dropping out of school. In the economy, many businesses of the nation and Minnesota are having difficulty and continue to experience increasingly intense foreign competition. The health of the Minnesota economy depends increasingly on the success of our business community in producing high quality goods and services for an international market.

(Minnesota Student Survey, 1989, Minnesota Department of Education; The Governor's Commission on the Economic Future of Minnesota, 1987).

**Core Values, Complex Skills, Quality Needed** To preserve and further develop the quality of life in Minnesota, core values consistent with the common good are needed. To succeed in the more intensely competitive world marketplace, the Minnesota business community needs higher level skills and more quality and productivity from a higher percentage of the workforce.

(The Governor's Commission on the Economic Future of Minnesota, 1987; Employment Policies: Looking to the Year 2000, 1986).

**All Minnesota Youth Must Have Complex Skills and Values Compatible with Quality of Life and Production** The number of youths entering the Minnesota workforce is decreasing. The number of youths needed to enter the workforce is increasing. Most entry level jobs now require higher level skills, quality, and productivity than ever before. Consequently, a higher percentage of youth entering the workforce will need higher level skills and values compatible with high quality and productivity.

(Minnesota: The State and its Educational System, Hodgkinson, 1989; Employment Policies: Looking to the Year 2000, 1986).

**Fewer Minnesota Youth are Ready** As the demands and expectations increase for more positive values and higher level skills from graduates of Minnesota high schools and post secondary institutions, fewer have values compatible with maintaining a quality of life and the ability to use higher level thinking skills, communication skills, and work readiness skills.

(Educating Students for the 21st Century, 1984; Legislative Auditor's Report, 1989; Work Readiness: A New Promise in Minnesota's Education, 1988).

**All Youth are Needed** By 1995 and into the foreseeable future, the economy is projected to need all youth graduating from high school and post secondary institutions for entry level positions. This means that youth who have typically not succeeded in our schools must now succeed in these positions.

(Employment Policies: Looking to the Year 2000, 1986; The Governor's Commission on the Economic Future of Minnesota, 1987).

**The Forgotten Half Must Succeed** The majority of the lower achieving students in Minnesota public schools either do not graduate or they graduate with low skills and with values and attitudes that are not geared toward quality or productivity. The highest quality educational experience is more essential than ever for this new workforce. Without a majority of them being capable of much higher levels of performance, Minnesota is at risk socially and economically. This risk is magnified when the aging of the baby boomers is taken into account. As the baby boomers retire, increased needs for health care, retirement income, and related public services will increase, and the success of the new workforce becomes even more crucial for the society.

(The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families, William T. Grant Foundation, 1981; Minnesota: The State and its Educational System, Hodgkinson, 1989).

**Success for Youth of Color** Youth of color make up an increasing percentage of the Minnesota youth in school and entering the workforce. They must also be successful in order to meet the social and economic demands of the 1990's and into the 21st century. Minnesota schools have not been as successful educating youth of color as they have been in educating other youth.

(Minnesota: The State and its Educational System, Hodgkinson, 1989; Within Our Reach, Schorr, 1989).

**Young Women in Technical and Leadership Roles** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women will make up two-thirds of the labor force growth in the 1990's. Present percentages of young women entering technical careers and prepared for leadership roles will be inadequate to fill the need. A much higher percentage is needed.

(Employment Policies: Looking to the Year 2000, 1986; Equity in Education Task Force Report, Commission on the Economic Status of Women, 1984).

**High Risk Youth Must Succeed** An increasing percentage of Minnesota youth experience risk factors making success in school difficult at best. More youth are experiencing poverty, substance use and abuse, pregnancies, dysfunctional families, and physical, mental, and sexual abuse. Social action organizations, the social service system, the education system, and industry, labor, and commerce have not been able to break the cycle of low performance and poverty these risk factors create. High risk youth must also succeed to meet the demands of the economy and society in the 1990's and beyond.

(Minnesota Student Survey Report, 1989, Minnesota Department of Education; Welfare in Minnesota, Commission on the Economic Status of Women, 1989; Within Our Reach, Schorr, 1989).

**Flexible, Responsive Schools** Changes in the society and the workplace are developing at an accelerating pace. Education sites and the education system must be capable of rapid change to meet the needs of youth living in and preparing for the changing society and workplace.

## *The Agenda for Youth*

These factors have set the national and Minnesota agenda for youth for the next decade and into the 21st century. A growing number of leaders in government, business, community, media, and education recognize that the factors create a crisis for the nation and for Minnesota. There is general agreement among these leaders that the present social and education organizations are not structured to produce the success for all youth that is required. The present system worked for the baby boom generation. When baby boomers graduated, the economic system could support a larger number of low and non-skilled entry level jobs that provided an adequate income. The society and the education system could afford to prepare primarily the top 50%. In order to support the aging population and to succeed in the changing social structure, workplace, and international economy, all youth must now be prepared for success.

The factors creating the crisis are too complex for the education system to resolve on its own. Successfully responding to the agenda will require the involvement of the private and public sector with the education community. Understanding of the crisis and support for major changes is broad based. Changes are needed for all Minnesota youth —rural, suburban, and urban; of all cultures and colors; male and female; from all economic levels; from all types of homes.

In the education system, the changes must achieve, at a minimum:

- Effective performance for all youth in higher levels of thinking, communication skills, lifelong learning skills, work readiness, and the ability to manage change.
- Values, attitudes, and skills for all youth that lead to quality and productivity of the society and the workplace.
- Elimination of the disparity in educational achievement between youth of color and other youth, between youth of middle and high income homes and youth of low income homes, and between youth from low risk and high risk homes.
- Elimination of the disparity between males and females in educational achievement in mathematics, sciences, technologies, and leadership.
- Education sites and an education system which can rapidly change to meet the needs of youth in a society with new and emerging social, economic, and technological priorities.

It was in response to the requirements for a stronger educational system that the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) was established. The Research and Development Project is expected to assist in establishing an education system that can accomplish the agenda for youth in the 1990's and into the 21st century.

## *Legislative Intent*

In the context of the national dialogue about education, in 1985 the Legislature established the mission for education in Minnesota:

**The purpose of public education is to help individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes toward self and others that will enable them to solve problems, think creatively, continue learning, and develop maximum potential for leading productive, fulfilling lives in a complex and changing society.**

Over the past several years the legislature took action directing the development of an education system better suited to accomplishing this mission, including: Planning, Evaluating, and Reporting (PER) and associated changes to learner outcomes and statewide assessment; the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program (MEEP); Assurance of Mastery (AOM); Staff Development; the Restructured Model For Secondary Vocational Education; and others. The legislature indicated the seriousness of its intent by attaching funding to many of these initiatives in a time when increased funding for any program was difficult at best.

Although each of these initiatives is having a positive impact, many advisory committees and legislators have expressed the need for even more comprehensive changes in the education system. In 1989, legislative leaders on various education related committees authored and sponsored the legislation creating the OEL and R&D Project. Their intent was to create an organization structure committed to developing and researching appropriate responses in the education system.

The OEL was purposely structured to provide a degree of independence in the performance of its R&D function. Specifically, the intent of the legislation was for the OEL to develop and research programs for transforming schools, to integrate previous school improvement initiatives into the programs, to test the programs to see what works and what doesn't work, to develop a system through which the research findings can impact all levels of the education system in Minnesota, and to establish linkages with post-secondary education systems that will support the transformed programs and will assist in transforming the post-secondary system to be compatible with the new structures.

The R&D Project is intended to establish processes to transform schools into new structures that includes a learner outcome based system of education. During the first two years, the development activities will put in motion processes that will lead to new structures for designing and delivering education. These research activities will help identify the site, district, regional, and state level policies and practices that support or hinder implementation of the processes. In the following years the research will document the degree to which the new structures achieve the increases in student learning required for the 1990's and into the 21st century.

The legislation outlines the relationship of the OEL to the State Board of Education. The State Board was directed to appoint a Research Advisory Committee with membership specified by statute. The Committee is to advise and assist the OEL in developing and implementing its plan. The State Board also was charged with selecting up to ten R&D sites to accomplish its mission, as stated in their 1988 publication, Directions For The Future: The Minnesota State Board of Education will provide the vision, advocacy, and leadership to improve significantly the quality of education throughout the state.

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## *The Vision for the Office of Educational Leadership*

In the context of the agenda for education in the 1990's and into the 21st century, the legislative intent, and the separate yet supportive relationship established among the OEL, the MDE, and the State Board of Education, the following vision statement for the OEL was developed:

**By the year 2001, Minnesota education will be transformed into structures that are capable of meeting the rapidly changing needs of society. These new structures will prepare all learners from all cultural, social, and economic backgrounds to experience success in a more complex global society and economy. This transformation will be accomplished in an environment of intense competition for limited resources and will require a coordinated system to respond to the educational and social needs of each learner and his or her adult support system.**

To achieve this vision, several key changes in education systems must be evaluated. Many of the changes outlined have a research reference. Some do not. There is no education system presently in place which produces the success for all youth that is required. Consequently, there can be no research base on such a system. The R&D function of the OEL requires trying some ideas for which inadequate, or no research is presently available. While developing these alternatives, research will be conducted to provide the base for evaluation and further implementation and development.

### **A Transformed Educational System is characterized by:**

- organizational structures that facilitate the interactions and activities essential to the development and maintenance of quality programs.
- relationships within the educational community in which all participants have significant roles in the continuous growth and improvement of school services.
- a curriculum development process that assures learner success in the full range of essential knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- instruction that is designed and delivered in ways that recognize the full range and variety of learner needs and capabilities.
- a profession whose members value and implement the best that is known about effective schooling and who pursue all possible options in improving services to children and youth.

- partnerships with parents, the community, the business community, higher education centers, and other social service agencies.
- networks which facilitate the necessary functions of innovation, exploration, research, evaluation, reporting of results, and overall support of improvement efforts.

The design and implementation of programs consistent with the characteristics outlined in these seven areas may take several years to accomplish. Evaluating the results may take longer. Yet the agenda for youth in the 1990's and into the 21st century will not wait. The OEL staff realizes the important role the R&D Project plays in accomplishing the changes required. The goals for the biennium are presented both with a knowledge of the amount of time change takes and the urgency of the agenda.

## *Research Component*

The research designed into the first two years of the plan will focus on two areas. The first will assess the four major components of the R&D Project: 1) the adequacy of the conceptual framework of a transformed system of education capable of achieving the agenda for the next decade and the 21st century; 2) the adequacy of the processes designed to guide the implementation of the program; 3) the effectiveness of the leadership development program to prepare site leaders teams to use those processes; and 4) the effectiveness of the professional growth program for site personnel focused on the identified elements of a transformed education system.

The second will use field based data to delineate the factors that appear to support or hinder the implementation of the R&D Project. This data will include personal and organizational factors at the site, district, regional, and state levels.

The design of the research will include: 1) case studies in which the researchers will document and analyze the events at the site; and 2) action research, where the researchers will provide data to the site personnel so that modifications can be made and assessed.

In subsequent years of the program, the research will be expanded to collect baseline data and follow-through data on effects on learning. The research will also focus on the adequacy of procedures to measure achievement of learner outcomes, especially those requiring measures of performance rather than knowledge.

Communication linkages between the OEL, the R&D sites, cooperating colleges, and all interested agencies and organizations will be developed to make the results of the research known. Future development efforts will be linked to the research findings.

## *Clinical Experience*

In order for the state plan to succeed it will be necessary for all participants to receive the training, support, and resources that will be required in so major an effort as educational transformation. One of the key efforts will therefore be a series of eleven-day clinical workshops during which participants will receive concepts and information, develop personalized learning plans, and design strategies for the initiation of transformation of education at their school sites.

For a workshop to be "clinical" it must provide opportunities for actual practice of new skills with students and colleagues. In the clinical workshops, participants will explore, and translate into action plans, eighteen "outcomes" considered essential in a transformed system of education. Fourteen of these define transformed organization structures and processes (such as team organization, grouping, leadership, communication, peer coaching, assessments, and coordination), and four define a system to personalize learning (such as determining learning goals, organizing learning units, collaborative planning, learner independence, program integration, and reporting learner progress). Workshop activities will include team-building and leadership-skill building, and implementation of the personalized learning process while working with groups of students.

The combination of receiving information, interacting with other adults as well as students, and hands-on experience in a personalized learning environment should provide participants with a comprehensive base from which to design and carry out transformed systems of schooling. (See Appendix B for greater detail.)

## *Summary*

This plan represents the thinking and analysis of a wide variety of people interested in the transformation of education. It is intended to guide the activities of the personnel in the Office of Educational Leadership as they design and implement the R&D Project. This plan is expected to serve as a guide for transforming schools.

## *APPENDICES*

## *Appendix A*

### *The Process Used to Develop the Plan*

The process to develop the plan was based on three operational guidelines:

- The legislation and legislative intent served as the final guide in program policy decisions.
- The role of the Research Advisory Committee was to review the content of the plan.
- Appropriate involvement of key stakeholders was provided to create a broad base of ownership.

The planning process began with the Research Advisory Committee developing the applications and selection process for ten R&D sites. The criteria for selection was carefully aligned with the legislation and with concepts the Research Advisory Committee considered central to Outcome Based Education. Following the selection process in September 1989, representatives from the ten sites assisted in identifying key components of their proposals that were designed into the plan. Included from the sites were: 1) superintendents or their designees, 2) Association or Federation presidents or their designees, 3) building administrators, 4) teachers recognized as informal leaders at the site, 5) students, 6) parents and citizen representatives, 7) a representative of the college or university affiliated with the proposal, and 8) other personnel considered by the proposal contact person to be part of the "critical mass" needed to initiate the R&D project. In November, a revised draft of the plan was developed by staff and was reviewed by the Research Advisory Committee.

The revised draft was presented for conceptual and process adequacy analysis to the Task Force on Education Organization, the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Task Force, the Minnesota Association of Secondary Vocational Administrators Legislative Committee, members of the Legislative Commission on Education, Minnesota Department of Education personnel, and the State Board of Teaching. It was also continually refined in a series of meetings by the Research Advisory Committee.

College and university representatives were also involved in analyzing the plan in a separate meeting. Included in this meeting were the deans of the appropriate schools of education and educational administration, or their designees.

Minnesota Department of Education leaders provided analysis of the plan. Two types of meetings were held. In the first, leaders from the Division of Instructional Effectiveness and the Division of Development and Partnership Effectiveness who have been developing the Minnesota Department of Education's concept of Outcome Based Education were asked to analyze the entire plan. This included personnel from Assessment and Program Evaluation, Curriculum Services, Instructional Design, Unique Learner Needs and Secondary Vocational Education. In the second, the meetings were designed to focus analysis on the areas of service provided by: 1) the Division of Development and Partnership Effectiveness (Community and Adult Education, Education Development, Indian Education, and Learner Support Systems), and 2) from the Division of Management Effectiveness (District Support Services, Education Data Systems, Education Finance and Analysis, Library Development and Services, Monitoring and Personnel Licensing and Placement).

With revisions based on the analysis provided by these various sources, a final draft of the plan was developed by staff. It was presented to the Research Advisory Committee for final review and refinement in December. The final plan was then presented to the State Board of Education at their January 1990 meeting.

The final draft was presented to key stakeholders for a final conceptual and process analysis in a meeting in February 1990. Included were representatives from board, parent, student, business, administrator, teacher, secondary vocational, college, university, and post-secondary vocational organizations.

## *Appendix B*

### *Characteristics of a Transformed Education System in Which All Youth Succeed*

The areas and characteristics considered essential for a transformed education system derive from a variety of sources.

As presently conceived, seven areas are considered essential to a transformed education system: Structures; Relationships; Curriculum; Instruction; the Profession; Partnerships; and Networking. As the R&D Project analyzes results from implementing changes in these areas, the list of characteristics will be adjusted. Changes or additions will be made collaboratively among the OEL, the researchers, site personnel, and consulting experts.

#### *Transformed Structures*

A transformed education system is characterized by *organization structures* that:

- provide long term, connected, and supportive relationships among adults and youth in the education sites;
- facilitate the design and delivery of programs and instruction that are more personalized for learners;
- provide for more collaborative development of staff and programs;
- facilitate the development and delivery of integrated curriculums;
- increase the ability of staff at each site to develop quality programs for the rapidly changing needs of learners entering a rapidly changing society and economy;
- facilitate the coordination of programs between pre-K and K-12;
- facilitate the coordination of programs between K-12 and post-secondary institutions;
- facilitate the development of curriculums based on projected future needs; and
- utilize a commonly shared vision among education sites and the education system.

### *Transformed Relationships*

A transformed education system is characterized by *relationships within the education community* in which:

- youth actively participate in the educational process;
- parents or guardians collaborate in the design of the program for their child;
- youth from all cultures and of both genders have positive role models;
- teachers and support staff collaborate in teams and other structures to develop, deliver, and evaluate programs;
- administrators, teachers, and other staff work collaboratively to develop and implement improved programs;
- leadership and decision authority is developed at the site level;
- sites are accountable to the community, local education agency, and state;
- the state sets clearly defined learner outcomes and system expectations;
- teacher and administrator preparation institution personnel collaborate with K-12 public school personnel to develop for new staff the new competencies required in the emerging teaching and leadership roles;
- entrance requirements and the design of post-secondary programs are modified to meet the needs of the learner in the transformed system through a collaborative effort of post-secondary and K-12 public school personnel;
- support services are focused on facilitating the development of the site;
- contract negotiations with all bargaining units facilitate decision-making as close to the site as possible; and
- all participants in the education system; including policymakers, teachers, students, parents, support staff, administrators, and advisory committee members, focus on continuous growth and development.

### *Transformed Curriculum*

A transformed education system is characterized by a *curriculum development process* which:

- focuses on all learners achieving outcomes rather than on the comparative grading of learners;
- focuses on all learners achieving outcomes rather than on providing a curriculum during a given time period;
- focuses on higher level thinking skills;
- focuses on integrating general, academic and vocational curriculums;
- ensures the articulation of curriculum from pre-K through post-secondary levels;
- uses multiple indicators for assessing learner knowledge and performance;

- uses assessment of learning to personalize programs and to summarize program results;
- focuses on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learners need in a multicultural and gender-fair society and workplace;
- involves parents and the community in the development of curriculums; and
- integrates learning in technologies appropriate to the future needs of learners.

### ***Transformed Instruction***

A transformed education system is characterized by *instruction which is designed and delivered* in a method that:

- personalizes programs for learners;
- accommodates the emotional, cognitive, social, and psychomotor needs of the learner;
- increases the learner's ability to remember, demonstrate and apply what they have learned;
- utilizes technology to facilitate the personalization of learning;
- ensures that instruction is appropriate to the intended outcome; and
- increases the learner's ability to integrate what has been learned.

### ***Transformed Profession***

A transformed education system is characterized by a *profession* which:

- attracts and retains the brightest and best of possible candidates of all cultures and colors to the profession;
- focuses on the continuous development of research referenced knowledge and competencies throughout a professional's career;
- emphasizes the role of the teacher as manager and facilitator of learning;
- emphasizes collaboration among all personnel, learners, parents, and the community;
- emphasizes the importance of the profession and the need to be committed to achieving results for all youth;
- emphasizes each professional being accountable for the responsibilities in their role and assumes a collaborative role for monitoring performance;

- emphasizes the need for each professional to be actively involved in improving the education system;
- encourages initiative, innovation, and risk taking in developing quality programs for all youth; and
- emphasizes the equitable and ethical treatment of all learners and their parents.

### ***Transformed Partnerships***

A transformed education system is characterized by *partnerships with parents, the community, the business community, higher education centers, and social service agencies* which:

- coordinate services provided by various agencies and organizations to impact high risk students and their adult support system;
- expand learning opportunities both on and off a school site;
- provide comprehensive education programs serving the needs of all learners in the community; and establish strong working relationships with colleges and universities with respect to staff preservice and inservice programs and also research; and
- respond to the needs of a culturally diverse community.

### ***Networking***

A transformed education system is characterized by *networks* which:

- encourage innovation and exploration;
- research processes used to design and implement change;
- evaluate the results for learners of changes implemented;
- report results to the entire education community; and
- support all efforts to transform the education system.

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